

Project Summary

Sierra Nevada Science Institute: Research, Education and Laboratory Services

Friends of Deer Creek is seeking funds for the purpose of assessing the need for a regional water quality resource center and laboratory in the Sierra Nevada, and to develop a business and implementation plan for this center. Our vision of this facility includes a reference library, visitor's center, training center and expanded laboratory, all functioning as a comprehensive resource for river monitoring groups, governmental agencies and the general public throughout the Sierra Nevada. The Sierra Nevada Science Center timeline and business plan will set the parameters and requirements for 1) the kinds of services offered; 2) how we propose to provide the services; 3) how we would pay for the services; 4) the types of groups that would most use the facilities offered. The need for this kind of resource in the Sierra Nevada is evident; consequently we feel it is time to develop the plan for its implementation. The Tinnery, an 1880-era, 3,000 square foot building in the heart of Nevada City, has already been set aside to house the Institute and will serve as a central resource for watershed groups, citizens, agencies and visitors. The establishment of the Sierra Nevada Science Institute is predicated on developing a viable business and implementation plan and using that to acquire funding for the renovation of the building and set-up of the institute.

The funding of the future Sierra Nevada Science Institute will provide a vital resource for people throughout the Sierra who share similar environmental challenges. It will provide laboratory services, training, and scientifically rigorous protocols, in a highly cost-effective manner that can equip other groups of citizens to become stewards of their own resources. Sierra Nevada watershed groups and others would no longer be trained from outside groups or have to send water quality or biological samples to labs in areas outside of our region and could keep the economic benefits inside the Sierra. Continued revenue for the resource center would come from fees generated by the lab and training activities, and the sale of items of general interest in the science institute. Friends of Deer Creek, situated at the heart of Gold Rush country, stands ready to become a regional resource for all of our neighbors who, like us, are dealing with the calamitous environmental effects of our gold mining history and recent growth activities.

We feel that a regional science institute will allow more frequent, in-depth investigations in the region due to the convenience and lower cost for sample analysis. The local training center would enable more watershed groups to do monitoring and hopefully, be able to remediate with common solutions more of the problems with which many Sierra communities are grappling (i.e. algae blooms, E.coli contamination, heavy metal contamination, nutrients from wastewater treatment effluent). Our vision of the institute includes the use of a videoconferencing system to train watershed groups in rural areas of the Sierra, a system currently being used by the Sierra Rural Health Network in Nevada City. We also plan to use FoDC's newly published "Bug Book" as a training aid so that other Sierra Nevada watershed groups can identify their own macroinvertebrates and use them as health indicators. In addition, Friends of Deer Creek has found a city-approved, commercial building in Nevada City whose owner has agreed for it to become a Sierra Nevada science institute and laboratory. Logically, the owner's willingness to use the building is predicated on a business plan which investigates potential funding sources for developing the institute, and provides an assessment of the market for Institute services, including types of laboratory analyses, training and outreach needed by watershed groups, agencies and individuals.

Above, we have outlined the scope of work for which we are requesting \$49,500 in support from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Proposition 84 Category 2 Strategic Opportunity Grant Program.